



*The Little Hunchback
of
Clothespin Alley*

BY
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PS3539
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1921

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HEADLIGHT PUBLISHERS
Stromsburg, Nebraska

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THE LITTLE HUNCHBACK

Sister has lovers, one, two, three;
They let the little Hunchback be.
I don't sit around and sigh—not I,
If all the boys do pass me by;
In an air-ship, gay, I sail away
To my castle in the air.
The birds and beasts, all gather round me
They are glad that I am there.
Friends, and lovers I have a plenty
And servants, there are twenty!
There, all admire me, the great and small
Because I am so straight and tall!

Refrain

O, I am a builder, a builder rare,
I am forever, building castles,
Castles—in the air!
O don't you wish that you were there,
In my beautiful, wonderful castle,
My castle in the air?
In my castle I am a queen,
And there, I reign supreme
In my beautiful, wonderful castle,
My castle in the air!

In my garden are lillies fair,
And I gather the roses there,
And all in the quiet evenings' dawn
The fairies dance upon my lawn
To the brownies' music low and sweet
Suited just to faries' feet,
And when the lights are all on above,
Then, I have my dreams of love!
Sure, a handsome boatswain comes to take
Me a sailing on the lake.
Now, me-thinks you know the reason why
I have no time to sit and sigh!

—Catherine Tongue.

Musical setting to the above lines by Laura
Sedwick Collins, New York City.

"O fear not in a world like this,
And thou shall know ere long,
Know how sublime a thing it is
To suffer and be strong."

—Henry W. Longfellow

THE LITTLE HUNCHBACK OF CLOTHESPIN ALLEY

It was in the beautiful home on Hadley Hill. A fire was burning in the grate for it was the rainy season in California. Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Hadley were entertaining an old friend who had just returned from over seas, Doctor Carter grave and thotful, a little grayed at the temples and his friend and companion, much younger in years, whom the doctor had requested to bring with him.

John Hadley, a boy of some twelve years, was standing by his father's chair, his arm thrown lightly around the older man's shoulders, his eyes fixed on the face of Doctor Carter. Sister, a girl, some years older, was seated on the hearth rug looking down into the fire, occasionally her eyes would steal a glance at the quiet stranger seated a little in the back-ground, then drop again to study the pictures in the flames.

Mrs. Hadley was speaking.

"No, Doctor Carter, father and mother Hadley did not long survive the misfortune that befell them, tho I believe they regained possession, thanks to a beneficent friend, of this old home on the hill. Sister married and is living in the east."

Mrs. Hadley looked thotful. Again raising her eyes to the doctor's face she continued,

"You, Doctor Carter, you never married. Were you never in love?"

The doctor's face seemed to grow graver and for a moment he looked thotfully into the flames. A sigh escaped him. Turning to Mrs. Hadley, he replied,

"Yes. I was in love—in love with a child."

"A child! O, Doctor, do tell us about it! Where did you meet her and was she beautiful?"

"At the orphanage in this city. Beautiful? Yes, in mind and spirit, loving, thotful of others and generous to a remarkable degree. Always cheerful in the face of adversity—she brot happiness to others. Cheerful, tho weighed down with affliction. She was—a little hunchback. They called her 'The Little Hunchback of Clothespin Alley'."

Mrs. Hadley threw up her hands in horror.

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"You —you in love with a hunchback!"

Thomas Hadley partly rose from his chair, his face expressing great emotion. He signaled his wife to be silent. Sinking back in his chair, he drew his hand over his forehead. Only Sister noticed the face of the stranger in the back ground. His handsome face had grown white. Claspings his hands tightly together, he leaned a little forward, and he too looked into the flames.

Sister arose and going to Doctor Carter laid her hand on his arm.

"Please tell us about her."

Little John joined his sister in begging the doctor for the story.

For a fleeting moment the doctor's eyes rested on the face of the stranger, then turning them to the fire he began:—

"I was young then in years and in practice. My work was principally among the poor, tho I had some friends among the wealthy. Your grandfather," turning to Sister, "was among the latter. I was frequently called to the orphanage. Little Hunchback and her brother Ben were inmates of that institution. About their parents, I knew nothing. Ben was a few years older than his sister. He idolized her and it was not to be wondered at. To see her was to love her. A face so sensitive and alive with inspiration, a cheerful, loving, happy face. At first I wondered at the great happiness that shone forth from the depth of her beautiful eyes. I lived to learn that her happiness came from within. She was blessed with a wonderful imagination. The flames of her vivid imagination were fed with stories from the Arabian Nights'. I was told that she kept a copy of the book under her pillow."

"Mr. and Mrs. Sylvester Stewart of Millionaire Row, childless, were about to sail for England. They decided at the last moment to adopt a child. They came to the orphanage. The children were called in for inspection. After looking them over, much as a horse trader would look over a bunch of horses, they observed Ben. In a moment the other children were forgotten. He was a bright and handsome lad. As if in anticipation of something the brother and sister had drawn close together and they stood a little apart from the other children. At this period, your grandparents," again

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looking at Sister, "came into the orphanage. They stood quietly in the back ground. The Stewarts approached Ben. Mrs. Stewart beaming upon him, inquired,"

" 'Would you like to be our little boy and travel across the waters with us?' "

Ben answered,

" 'Yes, if you will take her too,' putting his arm around Little Hunchback."

" 'What,' she exclaimed, drawing back, 'that horrid little monster!'" "

Ben turned on her with the ferocity of a young tiger.

" 'She aint horried and she aint no monster. She is my sister and where I go she goes.' "

"I was proud of the lad. The matron interceded and Little Hunchback, tho the tears were streaming down her cheeks, advised Ben to go. The matron parted the children who were sobbing and clinging to each other. Ben bade Little Hunchback 'Good-bye' telling her thru his tears that when he grew up he would make heaps of money then he would come back and get her."

"I noticed that Mr. and Mrs. John Hadley were greatly moved at the tragic scene. They came forward and tried to comfort the little sister. When Little Hunchback turned her sweet face towards them both fell for her charms. Mrs. Hadley turned to her husband and said,

" 'O, John, let us take her!' "

" 'Just as you say, mother.' "

"It was settled. Little Hunchback moved to the house on the hill, taking with her, her beloved book the Arabian Nights'. Shortly after her coming to the hill, I was passing this way. It was in the evening. I saw her and Sister walking thru the gardens. She was enjoying the beauties of the gardens immensely. Yes, I well remember that evening. Your father', speaking to Sister, 'was a tiny tot then. We called him Tommy. He and Pupsy, a large dog, were playing on the lawn. John Hadley was seated on the steps leading to the house, smoking a pipe. Mrs. Hadley came from the house and seated herself by his side. It was a scene of happy contentment."

"Little Hunchback's stay at Hadley Hill was very brief. Your grandfather had invested his money in a concern that payed big interests. He lost both

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the money and the interest. This place was heavily mortgaged. It went under the hammer. The next time that I saw the place was after the sale."

"This was the room," looking about him. "Everything was in confusion, furniture piled up, rugs rolled up, boxes about, men carrying out articles that they had bought at the sale. John Hadley, his wife and Sister, were bowed down with grief. Tommy" turning to Thomas Hadley, "I am speaking of you, as I knew you then, climbing over the boxes. He was thoroughly enjoying himself, being too young to realize the misfortune that had befallen the family. Knowing that Pupsy was to be sold, I came here thinking to buy him. Owing to professional calls I came late, so late that when I arrived Pupsy's new owner, a friend of John Hadley, was fastening a strap to the dog's collar to lead him away. Pupsy objected to leaving his old master. Tommy hearing the dog's growls, stopped in his play and climbing down from the box ran to the man exclaiming,

"'You let my dog alone! He's my Pupsy!'"

"The child hung on to the dog, protesting and scrapping like a little Indian. Never the less, Pupsy was led away. John Hadley took his little son in his arms and tried to comfort him. Tommy sobbed out his grief on his father's shoulder. Little Hunchback, whose heart seemed breaking at the sorrow of her friends, tried to comfort them. How well I remember her words,

"'My dears, my dears, do not grieve so. God will be with us in our new home. Heaven is every where and He lives there.'"

"John Hadley traveled all over the city trying to find a house to rent within his means. He was compelled for financial reasons to take apartments in Clothespin Alley. As you know it is a wretched place and only the very poor live there. There, the main occupation is washing. Clothes pins are very much in evidence."

"One day I was making some professional calls in the alley. One of my patients, a small boy, lived with his widowed mother in rooms adjoining Hadley's. Some children among whom were Little Hunchback and Tommy, were playing in the alley. Unobserved by the children I stepped into a small recess close to the stairway, leading to the Hadley rooms. Suddenly there was a great commotion.

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A dog came tearing down the alley with a can on his tail. A mob of boys followed in hot pursuit. Little Hunchback's eyes blazed. I had never seen the child in this attitude before. Before I could have even thought of stopping her, she rushed to meet the dog. She caught him and removed the can. Not withstanding, the mob hooted and jeered, some going so far as to imitate her hump, she held her ground. Tommy ran to her rescue. Taking his place by her side he doubled his fists and shook them at the mob. The dog all this time seeming to understand that in Little Hunchback he had found a friend, crouched cowering behind her. When the crowd dispersed I climbed the stairs and entered the room of the sick boy."

"A few minutes later I called on the Hadleys. When I entered the room Little Hunchback ran to meet me and with the freedom of a child she threw her arms around me and was exceedingly glad to see me. Her face wore the same sunny expression of internal happiness nor did she by word or look, betray the incident that had just taken place in the alley."

"I found the Hadley's very much discouraged. To make matters worse John had sold his farm when he moved to the city and now he had nothing to fall back on. He was doing odd jobs. Sister expressed her willingness to work so I promised to get her a job at the Mission where I had some influence. Little Hunchback had slipped from the room."

"When I descended the steps I could hear the voices of Tommy and Little Hunchback. The children were in the alley. Tommy was still angry. I heard him say,—

" 'They is naughty . They call oo names. I don't like ol' Cosepin Alley!' "

"Little Hunchback sat down in the door way and taking Tommy in her lap said,

" 'Tommy boy, this is not Clothespin Alley.' "

Tommy replied,

" 'Tis too!' pointing at the washings that were strung out."

" 'Tommy dear, those are flags—wonderful flags. This is Japan, Tommy.' "

"I stood very still not wishing to betray my presence to the children. How vivid she pictured the scene that was in her imagination! The child

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was in raptures." Turning to Thomas Hadley, "Do you remember it, old boy?"

Thomas Hadley was leaning forward, his face aglow with suppressed feeling.

"Remember it? Why man, I saw it! I saw the band marching down the street—I heard the music—I saw the gaily dressed officers, the Micado in his richshaw, other people in rickshaws, Japanese men and women, little Jap boys and girls running about—and the street shops—men and women bartering for the wares and the big black Buddah—and over head the flags waiving! Why man Clothespin Alley was never the same to me again! I saw it thru her eyes. It was one long, gala-day, with flags flying, drums beating and men marching." Thomas Hadley, after this outbreak, leaned back in his chair, his face pensive. The doctor continued.

"When Little Hunchback ceased speaking, Tommy threw his arms around her and hugged her."

"That night the sick boy grew worse and I was again called. It was late when I left the room. I stayed on until the child went to sleep. When I walked down the hall I noticed a light in the window of Little Hunchback's room. This window was off the hall. It was open. I stopped and looked in, wondering why she was up so late. She was in bed propped up with pillows. She was reading. I had no doubt that the book was the Arabian Nights'. I was sure when she closed it, for she sat for a moment in deep study then she said,

" 'We do need that lamp in Clothespin Alley.' "

"She had been reading the story of "Aladdin" or "The Wonderful Lamp." It is a story that is bound to make a deep impression on a person of such keen sensibilities as the Little Hunchback."

"The next day she and some children were playing around a junk pile, when she observed in the rubbish, an old brass lamp. She rescued the lamp from the junk that surrounded it and carried it home. When Little Hunchback entered the house, bearing her trophy, Mrs. Hadley was darning stockings. Looking up she spied the lamp in the hands of Little Hunchback. The child proud of her find showed the lamp telling her foster mother where she had found it. Mrs. Hadley threw up her hands in dismay exclaiming,

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“ ‘The garbage pile! Saints preserve us! It reeks with germs!’ ”

“The good lady insisted that the lamp be thrown away at once. Little Hunchback had no idea of parting with her treasure. She assured her foster-mother that ‘It was a really, truly magic lamp and that it would bring heaps of luck?’ ”

“She was permitted to keep the lamp but urged to lose no time in cleaning it. Little Hunchback procured a can of Dutch Cleanser and polished the lamp. When it was all clean and shiny she held it up and looking at it said,

“ ‘If you were really the magic lamp, I would wish to see Ben.’ ” “She placed the lamp on a shelf opposite the door leading into the hallway.”

“A very marked change had come over John Hadley. He seemed deeply depressed. I knew that it was not poverty that had so changed him but the turning away of his old friends, who had known him in the hour of his prosperity. Often when John and Mrs. Hadley would be walking down the street their one time friends would turn aside to avoid a meeting—sometimes they would pass without speaking. This cut the sensitive soul to the heart. He met his one time intimate friend, the man who had bought Popsy, walking down the street leading the dog. The man turned his head to avoid speaking but not so Popsy, tugging at the chain he broke away and running to his old master, leaped joyfully upon him. But the fellow was not such a cad as John thot. He told me afterward that when John held the dog’s two front feet in his hands and looking into the animal’s eyes said,

“ ‘Faithful heart! You do not desert me in my hour of adversity,’ ” “that he was overcome with shame and humiliation at his own snobbishness.”

“During those days of trial Little Hunchback did all in her power to cheer the drooping hearts. She prevailed upon them to attend Divine worship at the Mission. I sometimes feared that this was a sore trial to Little Hunchback. She was growing older and I feared that her sensitive nature would feel the neglect of the young men who conscious of her affliction, worshiped at the shrine of the more beautifully formed Sister. But if she felt the neglect the brave little heart never betrayed that she cared. She must know now that there was one who truly loved her in spite of her affliction.

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When ever she was in the same room with myself I felt her presence, tho I did not always see her in the crowd. Like a magnet she drew me to her."

Here the doctor paused in his narative and for a few moments studied the pictures in the flames. Rousing himself, he continued,

"One day there was a storm—a terrible storm. It seemed as if the heavens oponed and the floods came down. There was great uneasiness in the Hadley home. The table was laid and things were boiling on the stove. Mrs. Hadley walked uneasily about the room occassionally stopping to peer out of the window. Little Hunchback and Tommy were watching at the window. John was late. Presently the door opened and he came in drenched to the skin. Little Hunchback and Mrs. Hadley flew to his aid. Dry clothing were brot and a change made then they all sat down to the evening meal."

"In the morning John was ill—very ill. I was sent for. I discovered that he had a bad case of pneumonia. His mental depression and physical weakness did much to turn the tide against him. I told Mrs. Hadley that if he could be moved to a hospital at once he could be saced. She was in the depths of despair on account of financial conditions and poor soul I had nothing to loan her. My own financial condition was as bad. if not worse, than hers. Funny thing is the mind of a child. When we were busy working over John, Tommy, in his night-dress, entered the room crying out,

" 'Daddy, daddy, I wants Pupsy!' "

"Struggling and kicking he was carried out of the room by Little Hunchback. Things went from bad to worse. Mrs. Hadley and Little Hunchback who were taking turns sitting up with John, were completely worn out."

"I went to the mission to plead with Sister to give up her work and come home, but she crying, told me that she could not, that they needed the money that she earned, that it took, 'O, so much to live.' Poor child, my heart ached for her."

"Well, we had given up and it was thot that John would die. Mrs. Hadley was in despair. She and I were standing by his bed side. I had just told her that the chances were slim but if we could get him away at once, I still believe he would get

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well. The door between the living room and the bed-room was ajar. I could see Little Hunchback standing in front of the shelf on the wall. She was looking at the lamp, the one that she had found in the garbage pile. She was saying,

"O, how I wish that you were the magic lamp!" "

"She took it down, fondled it and went on talking to it."

"If you were the magic lamp I would wish for money for Doctor Carter says that if daddy could go to the right hospital his lungs will grow strong. O, how I wish that I were Aladdin and you the Wonderful Lamp!" "

"I saw her shake the lamp, then put it to her ear. I turned back to the bedside. A moment afterwards Mrs. Hadley left the room and I followed her into the living room. Again I said,

"There is hope if we can get him away in time."

She turned to me a face of hopeless despair and said,

"We have not the money doctor. We are poor. O, so very poor!" "

"At this moment Little Hunchback, greatly excited came forward holding in her hand a large roll of bills."

"O, mother!" she exclaimed, 'see what the fairies have brot us!'" "

"If the house had tumbled about our ears we could not have been more surprised."

"Little Hunchback explained that when she shook the lamp she heard some thing rattle. She removed the burner. There was no wick. She carried the lamp to the window and peering into it saw some paper. The paper proved to be a rolled envelope. She carried the lamp to the table and turning it up side down shook it. A few gold coins fell out. She opened the envelope to find that it contained bills. I took the bills from her hand and counted them. There were Five Hundred Dollars in all. Mrs. Hadley's face expressed both hope and doubt. She said,

"Doctor, is it right to use this money?" "

"I was perplexed. I carefully examined the bills. I carried the lamp to the window and looked into it seeking to find some explanation but the lamp had given forth all that it held. I asked Little Hunchback if there was nothing else? She showed

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the gold coins. Picking up the envelope that contained the bills she handed it to me. I took it to the window and looked it over. There was nothing. I was about to hand it back to Little Hunchback when it occurred to me to look on the inside. I did. Quickly taking out my knife, I cut the envelope around the three sides and found writing. Yes—I remember the lines. I read:—

Being that my only son had wasted in riotous living, my hard earned savings, rather than he should squander what remains I put it in this lamp and consign it to the scrap pile. If, perchance, it should be found, let the finder keep it and I pray God that he may use it for a good purpose.

“It was signed, ‘An unhappy, dying mother.’”

“That note settled it. John Hadley was taken to the hospital and we all rejoiced and blessed the lamp.”

“However, cares fell heavily upon the little family. John Hadley’s earnings being taken from them they found it impossible to live and pay the rent on Sister’s earnings. Mrs. Hadley joined the Washing Brigade. Little Hunchback assisted her in this task. I saw the family often in those days for my visits to the sick child in the room adjoining Hadley’s were more frequent. I often found Little Hunchback in the room entertaining the sick boy—sometimes by telling him stories. This recalls an amusing incident. After one of those professional calls I stopped at the door leading to the Hadley rooms and exchanged a few words with Little Hunchback. The door was open and I could see Tommy on the floor, playing with some toys. Little Hunchback bade me ‘Good-bye’ and entered the room. I should have gone about my business then but I didn’t. I stood there watching Tommy. He played a while then scattering his toys he got up. I saw that he was going to have one of his tantrums. He turned to Little Hunchback saying,

“‘I wants my Pupsy.’”

“She did not appear to hear him. She was in one of her day dreams. Tommy caught hold of her dress and cried louder and in a fretful tone,

“‘I wants my Pupsy!’”

“She freed her dress and started laying the table. Tommy was persistent. He followed her up and in very loud tones kept repeating that he wanted his dog. Little Hunchback stopped in her

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work to reason with him, but Tommy was beyond all reasoning. He threw himself on the floor, kicking and howling. For a moment Little Hunchback looked very serious. I had no doubt that she feared he would disturb the sick boy. Her face lit up with inspiration. She ran to the shelf and taking down the lamp said,

“ ‘Tommy boy. See. I hold in my hand the Wonderful Magic Lamp.’ ”

“The little rascal becoming curious stopped kicking. He raised his head to watch Little Hunchback whose back was towards the door. She went on,

“ ‘Some day I will rub it, like this,’ rubbing the lamp, ‘We will wish for Popsy and instantly—instantly Tommy, a big black giant will appear, and Presto. Popsy will be here!’ ”

“When Little Hunchback was speaking I stepped aside to let a negro, I believe the largest negro I have ever seen, enter the room. He was leading Popsy. Tommy turned his head and with a cry of joy ran to embrace the dog. Little Hunchback turned around, looked in terror at the negro and Popsy, let the lamp fall from her hands and tumbled over. I ran to her assistance. She rose of her own accord and looked in terror and wonder at the negro. He spoke saying,

“ ‘Boss say, bring dog back. He no count no moah. Jes howl all night. Keep ebbery body wake.’ ”

“Little Hunchback picked up the lamp. She looked at it and I thot her face registered fear. She said.

“ ‘You must be the magic lamp. I do really believe you brot back Popsy!’ ”

“ ‘Hey,’ shouted the negro, ‘Wot you say? Magic, nothing! I knows I done night run mah laigs off a getting him hiah!’ ”

“Little Hunchback by this time had completely won over the children of the alley. To the people of the alley she was no longer ‘Little Hunchback’ but ‘Little Sunshine.’ I often found her seated on the bottom of an old keg, in the cool of the evening, telling stories to the children of the alley. The stories she told were sometimes from the Arabian Nights’ more often they were the creation of her own fancies. I noticed that her health was failing as is often the case with those highly strung sensitive people. Many of them die young. Her

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body seemed to be wasting but the eyes were more brilliant and the face had a look more of heaven than of earth."

"Thinking of her and the delight it would give her I persuaded the Mission to give a picnic for the women and children of the alley."

"The day was wonderfully beautiful, an ideal day for a picnic. I was not there to see them off for the country. We had arranged for automobiles, ice cream, fruit, cake and all that goes to make a happy picnic. I went about my work thinking of her, and the pleasure she was getting out of it. It was not 'till afternoon did I find time to visit the alley—and call on the sick boy. I was sorry that no plans had been made so that his mother could have gone to the picnic. Strange to say my mind that day was not on the people of the alley but with the picnicians and Little Hunchback's beautiful face always loomed in the foreground of my thots."

"I climbed the steps with less agility than previously, knowing that I should miss her sweet face. Very cautiously I entered the room of the sick boy. If he were sleeping I did not wish to awaken him. I put my medicine case on a chair and looked about the room. It was so very still. I wondered where his mother was. Surely, I thot, she has not gone to the picnic and left him alone. I cautiously approached the bed. The child was asleep but to my surprise lying by his side, her curls mingling with his, was Little Hunchback fast asleep. I stood there watching them. Bending down, I am not ashamed of it—I am now an old man and I do not regret it—I pressed my lips to her forehead."

"Picking up my medicine case, I stole quietly from the room. At the bottom of the steps I stopped and looked back. I remember I said, "She sacrificed the picnic. God bless her!"

"Yes. She sacrificed the picnic that the boy's mother might have the day in the country."

"A few days after the picnic Mrs. Hadley and Little Hunchback were hanging out the washing. Popsy was asleep under a tree. Tommy, who was playing near by, became interested in an organ grinder with a monkey. Several children were following the grinder and Tommy joined the procession."

"Little Hunchback always lightened the burdens by her fancies. Just then she was playing that she

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and her foster-mother were merchants and that they had returned from Cairo to Bagdad with their laden camels. The clothes baskets were the camels. The clothes were wonderful tapestries that they were displaying to the public, and for the time being Clothespin Alley was a very busy street in Bagdad."

"The clothes were all hung. Little Hunchback was standing with out stretched arm, pointing to the hanging clothes which she was pretending to admire. She was saying,

" 'It is truly a wonderful display. The rich will come to admire, then to inquire,'—she broke off suddenly and looking about her said,

" 'Mother, where is Tommy?' "

"A search was made about the premises but Tommy was not to be found. Little Hunchback procured one of Tommy's stockings. Putting the stocking to Popsy's nose, she urged him to find Tommy. The dog was off with his nose to the ground, Little Hunchback following. Popsy led her into the business part of the city. On a busy corner of Market street was the organ grinder. The monkey was dancing and Tommy was passing his little cap. A crowd had gathered and people were putting money in the cap."

"Little Hunchback seized hold of Tommy and tried to drag him away. But Tommy liked his job and had no mind to leave it. The grinder realizing that in Tommy, he had a valuable asset, set up a cry of,

" 'Poleeze! Poleeze!' "

"Meanwhile Popsy growing tired of the delay, gravely walked up to Tommy, nosed him over and picking him up by the slack of his clothing, walked off with him."

"A policeman entered. The organ grinder accused Little Hunchback of trying to steal his child. Fortunately I came into the scene in time. The policeman walked off with the grinder."

"Popsy hearing his name called, turned back and deposited Tommy at the feet of Little Hunchback, much to the amusement of the crowd."

"It is remarkable how courageously Mrs. Hadley faced adversity. I believe there were times when the family suffered from the want of food."

"When a girl Mrs. Hadley lived on a peach farm. It seems that those peaches were constantly in her

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mind. One morning, after a day of unusual hard work, she was sitting in a rocker in the living room, thinking of the old peach farm, living again the days of her girlhood. Little Hunchback asked her what she was thinking of. She answered,

"'Peaches. I am so hungry for peaches and cream!'"

"Little Hunchback was standing at the window, turning over in her mind different schemes for obtaining the peaches and cream. As her eyes wandered over the alley she was startled and a little cry escaped her. A fruit peddler who had just taken a basket of fruit from his wagon, stepped in front of a passing auto. The car hit him. He fell. The basket and fruit were scattered on the ground. Quickly Little Hunchback received an inspiration. She slipped out, unnoticed by Mrs. Hadley, crossing the street she hurried to the scene of the accident."

"The peddler was injured so badly that it was impossible for him to continue his rounds. Little Hunchback bargained with him to drive the wagon and to take her pay in peaches and enough money to buy a bottle of cream. All morning she drove the wagon, Mrs. Hadley thinking she was in the room with the sick boy. When the fruit was all sold save one small basket of peaches that she kept for herself, she drove the wagon to the home of the peddler. She was taking the basket of peaches from the wagon when she felt a hand on her shoulder. Looking up she saw a policeman. Not knowing of the accident he thought she was stealing the fruit. He dragged her into the peddler's house."

"The peddler was seated in a chair, his leg bandaged."

"The policeman preferred charges against Little Hunchback who was still holding onto her basket of peaches. The peddler rebuking him explained the accident and the agreement. The officer left the house very much ashamed of himself. Little Hunchback gave the grateful peddler the money that she had received from the sales of the fruit and received in return the basket of peaches and enough money to buy a bottle of cream."

"That evening the family enjoyed peaches and cream for dinner. Later when I came into the room Tommy was licking the dishes. He told me

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in confidence that Little Hunchback did not eat her peaches and cream but took them in to the little sick boy. He also told me that 'Little Hunchback rubbed the lamp and a big black nigger come in—and Presto! The peaches and queam was on the table.' ”

Thomas Hadley smiled saying,

“I had implicit faith in the lamp and it was the only explanation she ever gave as to how the peaches and cream came into the house.”

Doctor Carter continued,

“A few days later I called on Mrs. Hadley and asked her permission to take Little Hunchback for a day in the country. I wanted to make up to her the lost picnic. Mrs. Hadley consented and Little Hunchback was delighted. I hired a little run-about for the purpose. I shall never forget that day. She romped about in the green fields, gathered flowers to her heart's content. Stooping over the water she decorated her curls with them. Gathering her skirts full of the blossoms she seated herself by my side under some shade trees. Growing weary she put the flowers aside and stretching herself out on the green grass resting her head on her hand, she looked thoughtfully around. I asked her if she missed the picnic that day and if she were not lonely in the room with only the sick boy for company. She answered,

“‘O, no, Doctor Carter. I had a perfectly lovely time!’ ”

“Rather surprised I asked her how that ‘perfectly lovely time’ came about. She answered naively,

“‘When the child slept I stole away to my castle.’ ”

“Your castle?”

“‘O, yes. I have a wonderful castle.’ ”

“And how did you get there?” I asked.”

“‘In my airship,’ she answered.”

“‘I got into my airship and I flew away. When I came to my castle I alighted. The birds and beasts gathered round me. They are always glad when I am there. There are knights and ladies and servants. O, Doctor Carter, I have many servants! In my castle I am a queen. I hold court there. I sit on the throne and the Knights and ladies do homage to me. There all admire me because—I am so straight and tall! And O, my garden—

THE LITTLE HUNCHBACK

Doctor Carter—you should see my garden! There are flowers, beautiful flowers—O, so many lillies—and I gather roses there. In the evening my ladies and I sit among the flowers and the brownies steal out from under the bushes and they play soft and low on tiny musical instruments—and the fairies come out and dance. When the ladies have gone and I am left alone with the brownies and fairies, and God lights his candles in the heavens Ben comes, then the brownies and fairies steal away. We, my brother and I, walk thru the gardens then we sail on the lake. O, yes. We have a wonderfully beautiful lake and my brother is a ship's officer.' ”

“You must have been very tired when you returned to the sick room and was your patient still sleeping?” I asked’.

“‘Yes. He was sleeping and I was tired—very tired—and sleepy. I lay down by his side and slept. I didn't waken 'till his mother came home from the picnic.’ ”

“That was a wonderful day—a day I shall never forget!’ ”

“John Hadley returned from the hospital, well and strong.”

“I got a position in an eastern hospital. When I returned, which was a number of years later, I found the Hadley family still in Clothespin Alley. Little Hunchback was ill. I was called. Her foster mother took my orders. John Hadley and Tommy, now grown to almost man's estate were in the living room and I knew that they were anxiously watching the door to Little Hunchback's room. She was grieving to see her brother Ben. She begged me to find him. She murmured,

“‘Perhaps, Doctor Carter, if you would rub the lamp—’ ”

“I promised to do my utmost to find Ben. But I knew the task was hopeless. He had never returned from England where he had gone with his foster parents, the Stewarts. They had made their home abroad.”

“When I left her bedside I found the living room filled with children. They were very quiet and orderly. The leader was giving Tommy a bouquet. He only said,

“‘For her,’ pointing towards her room.”

“I looked at the shelf. The lamp was still there.

THE LITTLE HUNCHBACK

I crossed the room—took the lamp down and rubbed it. I do not know why I did it. Perhaps it was a sense of faithfulness to her who had so often played with it. Strange—Ben was at that moment calling at the orphanage in quest of the little sister he had parted from so many years ago. He was directed to Hadley Hill. From here, he was sent to Clothespin Alley. After some delay he found the place. He was received by John and Tommy Hadley.”

“The meeting between the brother and sister was extremely touching.”

“It seems that the Stewarts had died leaving Ben the sole heir of their vast estate. Ben lost no time in buying Hadley Hill. He had the deed made out to John Hadley. Little Hunchback and the Hadleys moved back to the old home.”

“The coming of Ben wrought a change in Little Hunchback. She grew stronger. She was soon able to enjoy the great out-doors from a wheel chair. It was Tommy’s delight to push the chair. She had told Ben of her dreams of the fairy castle in which he had, had a part. He was absent from the hill as he said when he bade her ‘good-bye’ he had much to do to make those beautiful dreams come true.”

“A few months later she and I were walking on the lawn when we heard a whirring sound above us. Looking up we beheld an airship. It was circling over the hill. To our amazement it landed on the hill.”

“It was Ben. He had come to take Little Hunchback to the beautiful home he had provided for her. In her happiness and prosperity she did not forget the orphanage nor did she forget the children of the alleys. Her greatest happiness was when she was entertaining those little unfortunates.”

“The last time I saw her she was sitting among the flowers on her own beautiful lawn. It was evening. From the expression on her face, I had no doubt that she was watching the fairies dancing to the music of the brownies. There was a lake near on which I noticed many swans and other water fowls. A yacht was anchored close by. Ben came out. Little Hunchback rose to meet him. They went aboard the yacht.”

“I said that was the last time I saw her—but—I saw her again. You will think what I am about

THE LITTLE HUNCHBACK

to tell was the result of an over wrought imagination or perhaps you will think it a dream. I think otherwise."

"One evening I was sitting in my study. I was thinking of her. I sat there for some time, my mind busy with the past. I arose, as was my custom, to take a stroll on the lawn before retiring. When I stepped on the porch, to my surprise, I looked upon a broad stream of clear quiet waters. On either side of the stream were trees bearing fruit. A barge was floating on the water. Standing on the barge was Little Hunchback—but Little Hunchback no longer for straight and tall she stood. By her side were angels. Angels floated above her and one flew on before, leading the way towards the Holy City. I saw the Gates. They were ajar. An angel stood by each gate and over all there shone a great light. Me thinks I heard low voices singing."

"I was not surprised when the word came that she was dead. Her spirit had taken its flight at precisely the time that I had seen the vision."

The narrative ended, Doctor Carter arose and walked toward the stranger whose eyes were streaming tears. Sister intercepted him. Springing to her feet, she ran to the stranger and seizing his hands exclaimed—

"You are Ben! I knew it all along! O, how I thank you for all you did for my grandparents—and how I love Little Hunchback!"

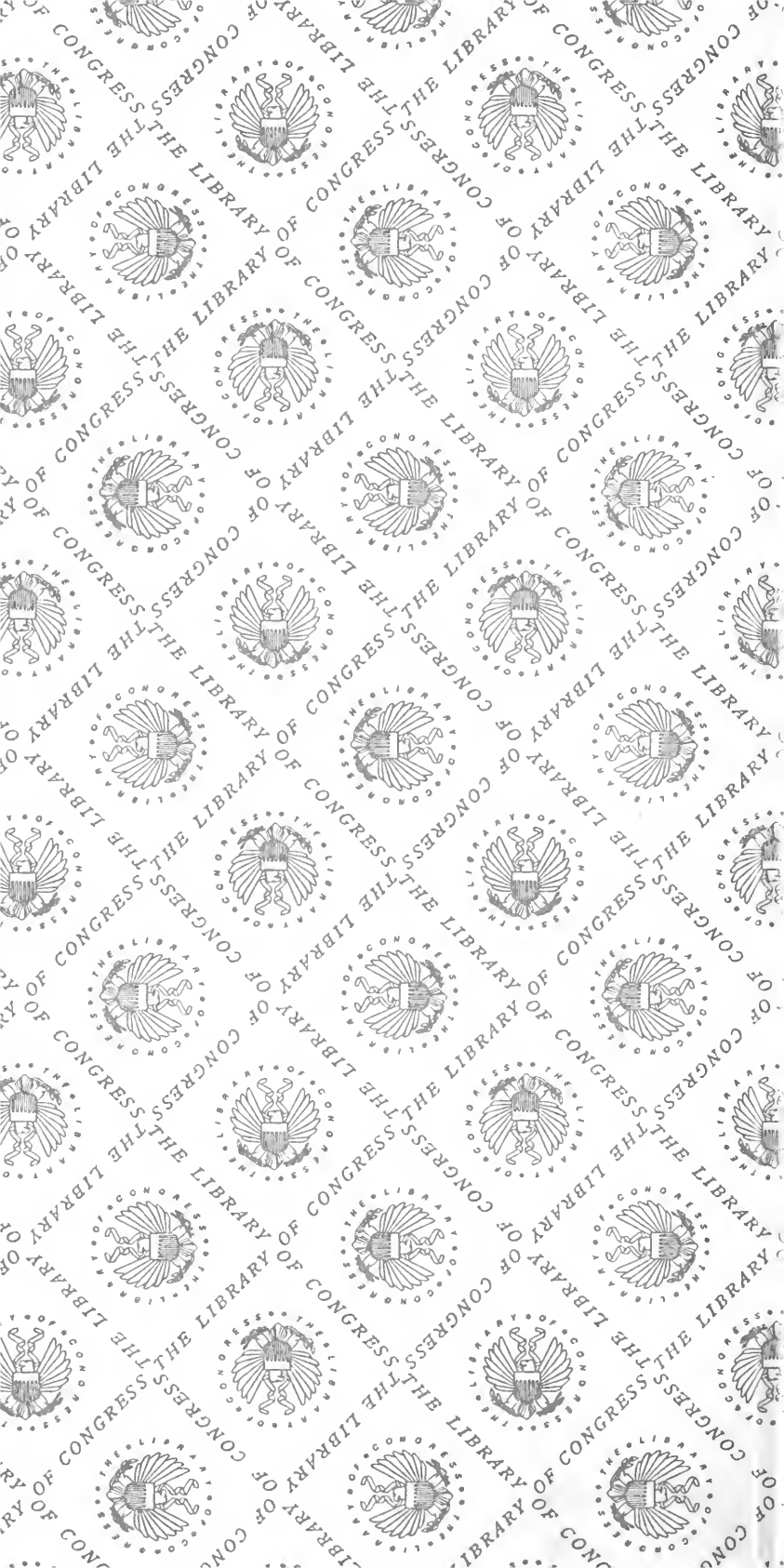
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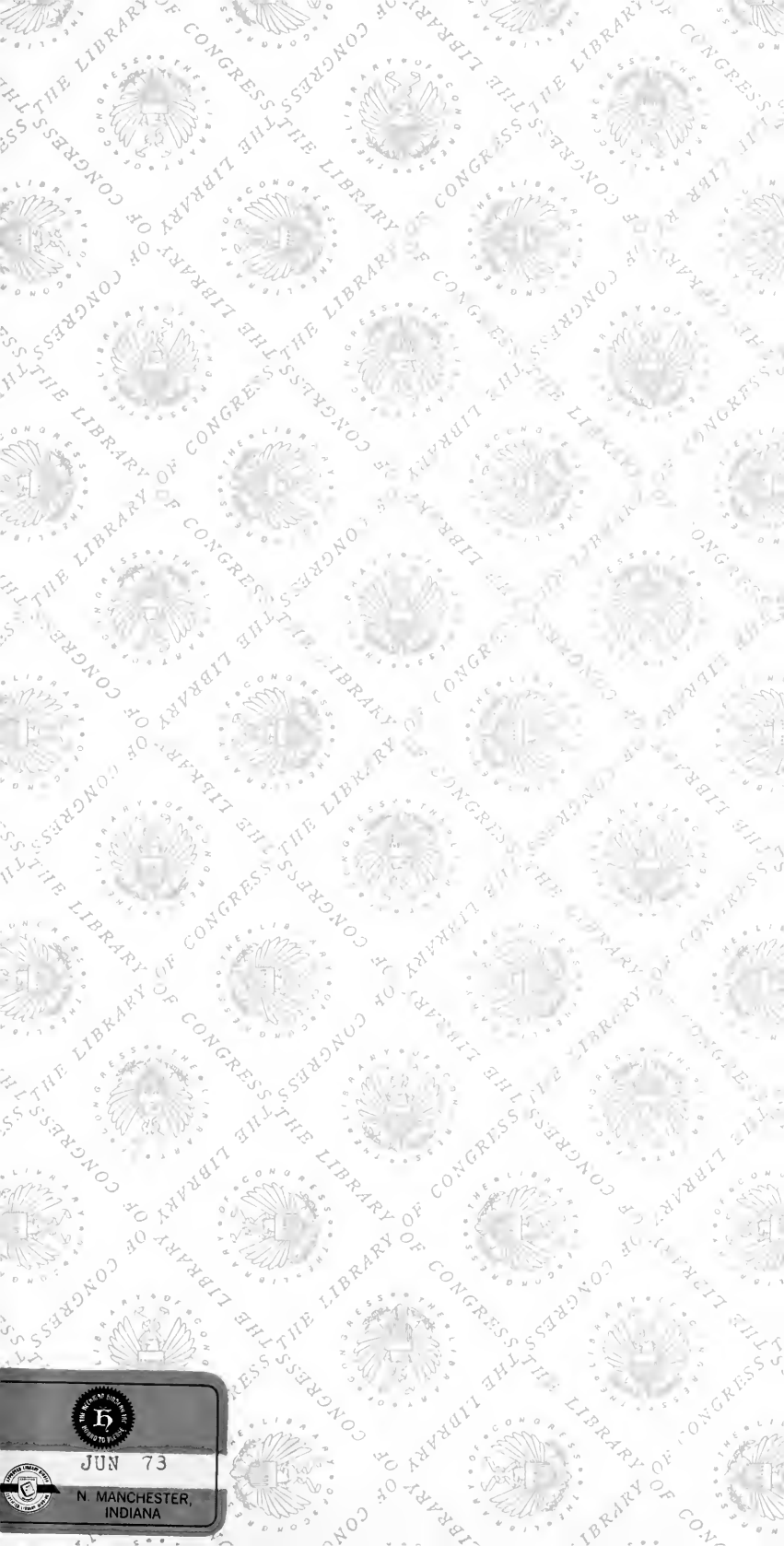














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